1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

Currently the Canadian government provides qualified medical attention for Indians at two hospitals, one for Yukon Indians in Whitehorse and another for Indians of British Columbia at Port St. John. The former hospital is about three hundred miles from Lower Post, while the latter is about six hundred. To secure admission and permission for an escort to either hospital, the missionary or police must radio the Indian Agent at Telegraph Creek. Should the agent be away from his office, traveling in the performance of his duties, a reply to the wire giving authorization for transportation and hospitalization may be delayed for several days. Such delay occurred during the summer of 1942 in the case of a young victim of spinal meningitis. The boy was in delirium for three days before authorization was received to fly him to Whitehorse, where he died and was buried.

A nurse and physician employed by the Indian Affairs Branch visit the Indian community at Lower Post each summer and suggest medical or hospital treatment as required. The Mounted Police remain vigilant for evidence of venereal infection, and when a source of such disease is reported insist on the patient receiving prompt treatment. These precautionary attitudes contribute to the fact that the degree of venereal infection, despite the recent large influx of strangers, is relatively slight.

Native attitudes toward hospitalization vary. A number of men expressed admiration for the set-forest hospital at Watson Lake and also spoke well of the care they had received in the government hospital at Whitehorse. Other people severely criticized the regimen of public hospitals, some without themselves having been patients. Speaking of the Whitehorse institution, where he had gone to have a dislocated leg bone reset, Old Man claimed that the wards for white patients are superior to those reserved for Indians. Asked how he liked the hospital, he commented: "I didn't like it. You smell something." The odor, he said, reminded him of death and was absent in the white wards which he had casually visited. He admitted that the staff of the institution had "treated me fine." Another informant complained that the same hospital had starved his young daughter, feeding her only bread and water twice a day. He asserted that the hospital employs doctors or government agents who try to starve Indians to death.

Death

Death, the separation of body and soul, is a condition that usually results from old age and from serious illness or accident. In holding these notions of death, the Kaska are not much fatalists resigned to dying. For the individual, his family, and friends the final moment is to be avoided and delayed as long as possible. Death, a bad thing in the contemplation of which the Indian is never at ease, not only represents a tragedy for the deceased, but also introduces danger for the surviving members of the latter's family as well as other members of the community who may come into the orbit of the event.

The living organism represents a union of body and soul or, as the latter is referred to by the Kaska, wind.* Some people also regarded the spiritual existence of the deceased, but did not clearly differentiate this concept from wind. Although death represents a final dissolution of the body-soul relationship, certain temporary alterations may occur without recon-

* Throughout this section the words "soul" (used) and "spirit" will be used with certain definite meanings. The term soul refers to the spiritual counterpart of the body. Upon death it becomes a spirit. The visible manifestation of a spirit is referred to as a "ghost."

sadly bringing about the end of life. These dreaming experiences underlie the belief that the soul temporarily leaves the body and "walks around." As the man in a story "lived one more thing—when you're gonna die." Should the soul travel too far from its proper home, the life of the dreaming person may be endangered. Old Vilas reasoned that he awoke one night to find his wife awake and sobbing. He shook her severely and called her badly. "Finally wood came out." He asserted that her soul had prevailed over her from the body which, as a result, was close to lifelessness. Old Vilas referred to the existence of the soul when he declared: "My spirit knows lots of things. Just like now I go anywhere."

Following the final and permanent departure of the body and soul, the spirit is believed to linger around the place of death for an indefinite period of time, generally from three days to a week. During this interim period the spirit is regarded as malevolent, being particularly dangerous for children below the age of puberty and to those relatives who have attended the deceased in life.* Even a child's spirit presents such danger to living children and so possibly to surviving siblings. The means of the spirit's to secure a child as companion is to the otherworld, while normal relatives who have injured it, the spirit seeks vengeance. Four days following Old Wilda's death, Old Vilas commented on the two lives that had recently broken out, one in Flora Donnelly's low camp and the other in Flora Will's new. Although empirical explanations for both accidents were readily advanced and discussed, Old Vilas thought that Old Wilda's spirit was also at work. "The old woman walks. Her body can stand for her. Flora never can stand for her, nobody can stand. I don't so the old people believed it." It was pointed out that Flora was last burned down house before death occurred. Old Vilas agreed but added, "Old woman just stays all in her morning."

During the period shortly after death, a spirit may also communicate to people through the crackling of burning wood. When this phenomenon is heard, a small piece of burn wood is often fired a flame into the stove as an offering to the spirit. Old Vilas revealed that Lucy Bow had been sent to respond to such a signal, while her mother's collapsed body remained in camp, by throwing a bit of bird into the stove. Following the period of sojourn (or, according to one informant, immediately after death) the spirit travels to the otherworld.

Occasionally spirits return from the afterlife and manifest themselves in human sounds and activities. Sometimes they are also seen in human guise although, lacking tangible substance, they remain to felt. Fear of ghosts is not so intense as prevalent characteristic of the Eskim. One experience of this kind was noted. Two days after Old Wilda's death, Old Vilas reported that he, his wife, Lady Bass, and Prudence Donnelly were awakened by the sound of footsteps in the room outside the cabin. A moment later they heard the sound of ripping canvas. Old Vilas expressed fear that one of the dogs had gotten loose and was breaking into the adjoining tent, where the old woman had died. Prudence arose and lit a candle. As soon as the light appeared, all sounds ceased. Prudence left the house but could find no trace in the snow. Upon checking the dog shelters, she found all the animals in place. The next morning Old Vilas looked around, but also failed to locate any tracks. We asked Old Vilas his opinion of the phenomenon. "I figger maybe ghost come back," he said. "That woman walks she needs."

* Compare Vilas, the interpretation of misfortunes of Five American Indian Tribes (Lucille Vilas, Prudence Pangaronis, Anthropological Data Bearing on the Interpretation of Misfortune, Lucille Vilas Pangaronis, Spokane and Southern Athapaskan Mythology (Lucille Vilas).

out of the house and remained after the women had returned. Otherwise the people would have had [illegible], [illegible], and midnight dances.

When a person died the death was at once announced to the people, who assembled and immediately commenced to sing a death chant. Only middle-aged and old people joined in the singing of death chants. If young people sang, they were apt to die early in life. The song was sung in presence of the corpse and the latter was addressed in the song. It is said that sometimes when it seemed sure the person was dying the people assembled beforehand and sang the chant on the death bed. The chief and possibly the only object in singing the death chant was to assist the soul of the dead person to find the trail to the supreme land, and therefore even though the singing of the chant at the time of the death ceased [illegible], gave him all the more chance of easily finding the trail. It is said the beginning of the trail is obscure at best to find and dead people are liable to have trouble in finding it and sometimes go on the wrong trail or get lost. It seems the change from the state of life to that of death is considered to be sudden and extreme and the soul [illegible] that of an elderly person is the being parted from the body is more or less in a state of shock or partly stupified and therefore needs people's assistance.

[illegible]

Upper Liard
Dease River

A-Smagmaaa E-5 (1963-1965);904 MD:0 Datawa MD:0

Dease River
Telona
Francis Lake

764 Everyone in camp assembled when death seemed inevitable. Long ago bodies were disposed of by cremation and the Tahltan mentioned the custom a long time after the Dease River people began to bury their dead in the ground. Coffins as well as any form of use buried were denied. Members of the opposite moiety handled the corpse. Mourning rites included hair cutting but not mutilation. The dwelling in which death had taken place as well as some of the possessions left by the deceased were in an end by destruction, a practice designed to avoid illness.

765 Tahltan. Death followed when the wind disarmed the body and journeyed to an abandoned shack which the inhabitants burn little. The corpse was cremated and the bones burned in a small pit about one foot deep. Anyone who had handled the corpse avoided food and drink for two days but no particular relatives were charged with this responsibility. Personal ornaments and spare foodstuffs could not be touched. In mourning a widow cut down her hair, fasted for several days and wore ragged clothing. For eight to nine days little deliberately keeping herself awake by means of sharp sticks placed under her head. She plans for remarriage demanded the approval of her brother-in-law or his eldest son, but himself. Scarification, face blackening, and hair singeing were denied. A widower observed food and drink taboos but did not cut his hair.

[94] Frequent destruction following death was denied.

770 Tahltan (also Kaska). A person's wind or soul, buried in the stomach, vanished the breath as the air then was inhaled. Just as breathing vanished like the loss of the wind (vapor) produced death. The inhabitants denied that there could be a temporary separation of body and wind. The soul continued to survive after quitting the body and it is best belonged to a good man because entertainment. Following death the ghost (wind), which was always dangerous, remained in the neighborhood for a period ranging from two days to a year. During this time it haunted, associated with women, visited its birthplace, and complained very much that the deceased throughout his life had left unaccomplished. Its appearance the ghost resembled a living Indian but could only be seen and not heard normally. Ghosts also avenged themselves for injuries their host have sustained in life. To overcome themselves they sometimes attacked. Everything did not constitute a ghostly departure.

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white and, dogs also anthropomorphic in the form a light spreading place on the snow bird or the spirit in the dark and a place place in the sky. Only people killed a bullet go to the sun. Sometimes the souls are sent down as the corpse. When the dead reside in an inside, people say there is a not uncertainty. While the presence of the ghosts demands burning a fire of chips, it is said that the spirits are watching a fierce warrior chase and wrestle through the chips, and it some story as the companion animal. The sky spouse is said to be the sun shade. This is the sun is associate the life souls, but spouse is to be in a land is always sunshine. Dead people go to it. They have a moment's dispute why sun made a fire. Dead are afraid, and sun took it to where again, a woman shows until they took the place of shades in the sun where conditions are not as good as in the other places, and lead a stay sunny life. Tahltan cohabitation (Kaya 1963), 46 (1 Sang, Kaska) (1963, 4), who was spoke of the dead appearing in the northern lights.